

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA NIACT IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS:PFOR, PN

SUBJECT:SECRETARY'S TESTIMONY HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
COMMITTEE

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT IS NOT YET AVAILABLE. FOLLOWING IS
FROM A TAPE FOR EMBASSY'S BACKGROUND ONLY AND IS NOT OFFICIAL
OR APPROVED.

QUESTION: IS THE UNITED STATES STILL NEGOTIATING A TREATY
WITH PANAMA AND IF SO WHY?

ANSWER: THE UNITED STATES FOR THREE ADMINISTRATIONS HAS
BEEN DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE FOR TEN YEARS AND THEY HAVE
BEEN DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE BECAUSE IT IS NOT--CONTRARY TO
SOME ALLEGATIONS--A PROBLEM BETWEEN US AND AN INDIVIDUAL
LEADER IN PANAMA. IT IS AN ISSUE THAT HAS AFFECTED THE
WHOLE WESTERN HEMISPHERE AND WHICH COULD POISON OUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ENTIRE WESTERN HEMISPHERE AND PUT S
INTO AN EXTREMELY COMPLICATED POSITION. WE ARE NEGOTIATING
WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA TO SEE WHETHER IT IS POSSIBLE
TO COME TO AN ARRANGEMENT THAT PROTECTS OUR VITAL INTEREST

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WITH RESPECT TO OPERATION AND SECURITY OF THE CANAL. WE

HAVE NOT COME TO ANY AGREEMENT AND THEREFORE WE CANNOT BE SURE AT THIS MOMENT WHETHER IT IS POSSIBLE TO COME TO SUCH AN AGREEMENT. WE ARE KEEPING THE CONGRESS CURRENTLY INFORMED AND ANY AGREEMENT OF COURSE WOULD HAVE TO BE APPROVED BY THE CONGRESS. SO ALL I CAN TELL YOU IS THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE NOW GOING ON. THEY ARE GOING ON BECAUSE WE DO NOT WANT A GUERILLA WAR IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE WITHOUT HAVING MADE EVERY EFFORT TO FIND A SOLUTION THAT PROTECTS OUR VITAL DEFENSE AND OPERATIONAL INTERESTS. I CANNOT YET TELL YOU WHETHER SUCH AN AGREEMENT IS POSSIBLE. WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATING IT.

QUESTION: YOU ALLUDED TO SOME OF THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FAILURE TO CONCLUDE A TREATY WITH PANAMA. COULD YOU BE A LITTLE MORE SPECIFIC. I HAVE IN MIND, FOR EXAMPLE, IS THE PANAMA CANAL SUBJECT TO SABOTAGE?

ANSWER: WELL, THE DANGER WE SEE IS THAT THE COUNTRIES OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE WILL UNITE WITH PANAMA IN A POLICY OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY HARRASSMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IN PANAMA. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE PANAMA CANAL IS VITAL TO THE UNITED STATES AND THEREFORE THE UNITED STATES IS NEGOTIATING TO MAINTAIN ESSENTIAL SECURITY AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES WITH RESPECT TO THE CANAL, SO THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT THIS. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER WE CAN COME TO AN AGREEMENT THAT WOULD FIND WIDE SUPPORT IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, THAT PROTECTS OUR SECURITY CONCERNS, AND AT THE SAME TIME REMOVES THE DANGERS THAT I HAVE DESCRIBED. IT IS NOT AN ISSUE BETWEEN TORRIJOS AND US. IT IS AN ISSUE FOR THE WHOLE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.

QUESTIONER: YOU DIDN'T QUITE TOUCH ON THE POINT I RAISED. IS THE CANAL SUBJECT TO SABOTAGE?

ANSWER: THE CANAL WITH SO MANY LOCKS IS EITHER SUBJECT TO SABOTAGE OR MIGHT REQUIRE, UNDER CONDITIONS OF GUERILLA WARFARE, SUBSTANTIAL AMERICAN FORCES TO PROTECT IT. NOW IF IT COMES TO THAT POINT WE ARE ABLE TO DO IT AND WE ARE NOT GOING TO BE BLACKMAILED INTO AN AGREEMENT THAT IS CONTRARY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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TO OUR VITAL INTEREST, BUT WE DO HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO DO OUR UTMOST TO PREVENT SUCH A SITUATION FROM ARISING. KISSINGER

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